

Michigan Forest Stewardship Program



Fiscal Year 2021 Annual Report

The **Vision** of the Michigan Forest Stewardship Program is to provide forest landowners and their families access to information, markets, people and programs to help them manage, protect and enjoy their woods now and for future generations.

The **Mission** of the Michigan Forest Stewardship Program is to partner with U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, other government agencies and private organizations to provide 250 foresters and 1,500 loggers with resources to help them serve 400,000 forest owners as they manage, protect and enjoy 12 million acres of private forest land.

Fiscal Year 2021 Accomplishments

Landowner Assistance. Michigan Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) helps landowners move from awareness to engagement to action, creating a progression that leads to success in their woods. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) uses the GovDelivery email system to inform 16,000 subscribers about private forests. The DNR also supported many partners who provided outreach to more than 8,500 landowners and their families about forests and forest management. Many outreach events were canceled or held online in FY2021 because of the ongoing pandemic.

Forests for Fish. Forests for Fish is a campaign to help foresters, loggers, anglers, landowners and the public understand how forests contribute to abundant clean water and quality fish habitat. Forests for Fish provides educational content at ForestsForFish.org and social media promotion at Facebook.com/ForestsForFish.

Tree Planting for Water Quality. USDA Forest Service administers Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding to plant trees to protect water quality. The Forest Stewardship Program obtained \$254,000 from the Forest Service and \$50,000 from



Fig. 1 Students at Frankfort-Elberta Area Schools plant trees on Arbor Day at their 40-acre school forest.

the Arbor Day Foundation to plant 110,000 trees at 10 school forests throughout Michigan. Seven consulting foresters are helping schools with these projects and most spent FY2021 doing site preparation for tree planting in FY2022. Four schools – Forest Park, North Dickinson, Vanderbilt and Frankfort - were able to plant the first 22,128 trees at their school forests in FY2021.

Training Foresters and Loggers.

The DNR completed its \$1 million Regional Conservation Partnership

Program agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in FY2021 to train foresters and inform landowners about NRCS financial assistance programs. Over the past 6 years, the DNR offered 188 trainings on a wide variety of topics for 6,987 foresters and loggers. The pandemic continued to disrupt in-person training in FY2021, so FSP partnered with Michigan State University Extension, Sustainable Forestry Initiative and Michigan Society of American Foresters to offer online training for loggers and foresters.

Every School in the Forest. The Forest Stewardship Program completed a \$306,097 “Every School in the Forest” grant from the Forest Service in FY2021. The project invested \$33,709 to train 57 teachers in Project Learning Tree curricula and provide outdoor classroom supplies. The grant contributed \$2,071 toward 20 Wheels to Woods trips for 1,265 students in FY2021. Foresters developed 12 forest stewardship plans for school forests or scout camps in FY2021. These plans covered 1,657 acres and cost \$21,693 in federal funds and \$2,920 in match. Every School in the Forest continued to distribute the “Michigan School Forest Guide” in FY2021, which won a national award in 2020.

Wheels to Woods. This program provides transportation grants to schools to go on educational field trips to nearby forests. Wheels to Woods is a partnership of Michigan Tree Farm Committee, Michigan Forest Products Council, Michigan Project Learning Tree and FSP. Wheels to Woods funded 20 trips for 1,265 people in FY2021 at a cost of \$6,104 or \$4.83 per student. This is a sharp decline from previous years because the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic canceled most field trips in FY2021. Over the past six years, Wheels to Woods has supported 38,735 students, 1,799 teachers, 336 outdoor educators and 5,394 parents on 428 trips. Paige Lackey, with Huron Pines AmeriCorps, was the administrator for Wheels to Woods in FY2021. Applications and other information are at [WheelsToWoods.org](https://www.wheelstowoods.org).



Fig. 2: Doyle Forest Products installing crane mats over a small stream to protect soil and water quality during forest management activities.

Little Bridges of Michigan Counties. FSP obtained a \$301,313 grant from the USFS in FY2019 for “Little Bridges of Michigan Counties” to implement Forests for Fish by helping loggers use crane mats to protect wetlands and small streams. Partners are the Michigan Association of Timbermen, Michigan Tree Farm Committee and Michigan Sustainable Forestry Initiative. Timbermen spent \$41,030 to give away 80 crane mats to loggers in FY2021. SFI gave \$50 gas cards to 18 loggers at its core training. Tree Farm provided 105 site visits to landowners for \$16,730.

Partnership Grants. The Forest Stewardship Program invested \$40,317 in the capacity of key partners who serve family forest landowners statewide. Michigan Tree Farm Committee received \$14,820 to promote Tree Farm to landowners, support committee administration and for annual audits of Michigan’s two independently managed groups (Green Timber Consulting Foresters and Grossman Forestry). Michigan Association of Timbermen received \$15,350 to support the Michigan Master Logger program that certifies and audits in the woods the outstanding work of 85 Master Loggers. Michigan Forest Association received \$3,050 to pay for first-year membership of 122 landowners who developed

a forest stewardship plan in FY2021. Michigan Association of Consulting Foresters (ACF) received \$7,089 to reimburse members for providing outreach and education to landowners and to develop their new website at MichiganACF.org.



Fig. 3: Forester Dean Francis, left, and Alger County landowner Tim Hill.

2021 Stewardship Forester. Dean Francis of Upper Michigan Land Management in Escanaba won the 2021 Stewardship Forester award at the meeting of the Association of Consulting Foresters in February. Dean has written 561 forest stewardship plans since 1998. ACF foresters write more forest stewardship plans than any other foresters.

Forest Stewardship Plans. Michigan developed 268 forest stewardship plans covering 63,235 acres in FY2021. This included 256 plans for landowners and 12 for school forests or scout camps. Michigan relies on 150 private sector foresters to develop plans for landowners. Most landowners, 84% in

FY2021, use their plans to enroll in the Commercial Forest Program (23%) or the Qualified Forest Program (61%) for lower property taxes. FSP provided \$80,214 in federal funds for cost-share for the 256 landowner plans (\$313 per plan) which were matched by \$316,274 in landowner out-of-pocket costs. There are now 7,133 landowners and 1,201,507 acres with forest stewardship plans in Michigan, which is 13% of our 9 million acres of family forests. About 70% of FSP acres are in the First Congressional District alone.

Fiscal Year 2021 Finances

Michigan Forest Stewardship Program spent \$557,673 and had direct economic impacts of \$1,038,710 in FY2021.

Table 1. Michigan Forest Stewardship Program Spending in Fiscal Year 2021.

Funded Projects	Administration	External Grants	Source	Percent	Private Match
Forest Stewardship - administration	\$125,160		USFS	22%	
Service foresters & GIS reporting	\$79,093		DNR	14%	
Grants to foresters for FSP plans		\$80,214	USFS	14%	\$316,274
Partnership grants		\$40,317	USFS	7%	
Little Bridges - administration	\$9,046		USFS	2%	
Grants to partners		\$58,660	USFS	11%	\$69,418
Every School in the Forest – admin	\$7,668		USFS	1%	
Grants to partners		\$57,473	USFS	10%	\$18,890
Trees for School Forests – admin	\$15,637		USFS	3%	
Grants to partners		\$64,087	USFS	11%	
Funds for tree seedlings		\$10,318	ADF	2%	
RCPP Training Foresters	\$0		NRCS	0%	\$76,455
Huron Pines AmeriCorps member	\$10,000		DNR	2%	
Subtotal	\$246,604	\$311,069			\$481,037
Grand Total	\$1,038,710				

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About 82% of funds in FY2021 for Michigan Forest Stewardship Program came from USDA Forest Service, State and Private Forestry. DNR spent \$246,604 or 44% internally on program coordinator and other administrative expenses. The DNR awarded \$311,069 or 56% of funds in external grants to private sector partners to deliver Forest Stewardship Program activities. The Forest Service requires match on federal funds; 82% of matching funds come from the private sector and 18% from the DNR. However, Table 1 underreports DNR labor costs for three service foresters, three accountants, three administrative assistants, four spatial analysis staff and seven managers for plan payments and spatial reporting because not all charged their time to FSP. Arbor Day Foundation is a new financial partner in FY2021, providing funds to purchase trees for school forests.

Priorities and Strategies

The Michigan Forest Stewardship Program has five priorities to guide investment of state and federal resources.

- 1) *Empowered Landowners.* Awareness, engagement and learning lead to landowner success in their woods.
- 2) *Accessible Markets.* Sell products and improve forests for profit, not at a cost to landowners or society.
- 3) *Clean Water.* Forests produce ecosystem services that should be valued by society and in the market.
- 4) *Certified Forests.* Define ethics and provide confidence to consumers that forests are managed well.
- 5) *School Forests.* Students, teachers and parents discover the amazing wonders of urban and rural forests.



Fig. 4 Maureen Stine, left, of Natureology and Brittany VanderWall, right, Presque Isle Conservation District forester, lead a Tree Farm field day at the 40-acre forest owned by Michigan Forest Association near Pellston for the 2021 Michigan Forest Celebration

Michigan Forest Stewardship Program uses three strategies to implement its priorities.

- 1) *Public-Private Partnerships.* Invest in private-sector organizations that assist family forest owners.
- 2) *Build Capacity.* Help foresters and loggers grow their businesses to better serve more landowners.
- 3) *Plans as Connections.* Simple plans connect landowners to a forester, their peers and useful programs.



Questions? Contact Mike Smalligan at 517-449-5666 or SmalliganM@Michigan.gov.

Michigan DNR is an equal opportunity provider and employer in all of Michigan.